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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 001792

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE; NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/WATERS

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TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [IS](#) [KDEM](#) [KPAL](#)
SUBJECT: MUSTAFA BARGHOUTI SEES HIMSELF LIKELY SECOND
CHOICE OF HAMAS SUPPORTERS

REF: JERUSALEM 01562

Classified By: Acting Principal Officer Thomas M. Duffy, Reasons 1.4 (b)
) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. Mustafa Barghouti discussed Hamas' internal tensions in an August 18 meeting with Staffdel Talwar. He said the national unity government (NUG) had been a "missed opportunity" that the international community could have used to demonstrate Hamas' inability to govern. Barghouti said he supports PM Salam Fayyad, but the Prime Minister is a "one-man show" with a weak cabinet. Barghouti said Hamas' take-over of Gaza was the action of its extremists, rather than the "moderates" and "pragmatists," who he believes include Khaled Mesha'al. He said the take-over of Gaza alienated many Hamas supporters, but they have not shifted their political allegiance to a new party or person. He suggested that he is the most likely beneficiary of this support, noting that a recent NDI poll found him to be the second place choice of Ismail Haniyah supporters in a presidential race. End Summary.

The National Unity Government, Hamas, and Gaza

¶2. (C) Mustafa Barghouti told Staffdel Talwar in an August 18 meeting that the international community's refusal to engage with the national unity government (NUG) was a "missed opportunity" and protected Hamas from exposure of its inability to govern. Had the international community engaged with Hamas, Barghouti said he believes Hamas would have accepted the Arab Peace Initiative. He said he believes if Hamas had been allowed to govern normally, it would have proved to be like Fatah: corrupt and unable to govern. He said, given that Hamas ran on a platform of reform, public dissatisfaction would have prompted early elections, and Hamas would have been defeated democratically.

¶3. (C) Barghouti said Hamas includes moderate, pragmatic and extremist wings, and he put Damascus based Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mesha'al in the pragmatic wing. He said Hamas' take-over of Gaza weakened the moderates and the pragmatists relative to the extremists who drove the action. He claimed that the week before the take-over, he had successfully intervened with Mesha'al in coordination with President Abbas to calm the situation, but that the extremists lied about their intentions and took actions that led to their take-over of Gaza.

¶4. (C) Barghouti said he believes Hamas lost a lot of support in Gaza after the violent take-over, but that this support is not yet redirected to another political loyalty. Citing a recent NDI poll (reftel), Barghouti said he is the second place choice of Ismail Haniyah supporters in a potential presidential race and concluded he and his party, Mubadara,

are most able to gain the support of disaffected Hamas voters.

Fayyad's Government

15. (C) Barghouti told Staffdel Talwar that he respects Prime Minister Salam Fayyad and believes that he is a reformer with credibility. However, he said Fayyad is a "one-man show" and dismissed his cabinet as "weak." He said he would have liked to help Fayyad, but he refused to join his government. He added that, therefore, he should not complain too much about the quality of ministers. Barghouti said the government is not perceived as sufficiently legitimate or legal, because it was not endorsed by the PLC. He also said he anticipates that Fayyad's difficult relationship with Fatah, which is not part of his cabinet, will mean a political cost.

Mubadara

16. (SBU) Barghouti had attended a Mubadara-sponsored celebration for students who completed the Tawjihi (end of year exams) before seeing Staffdel Talwar, and he was enthusiastic about his party's prospects. According to Barghouti, Mubadara supports a two-state solution, a Palestinian capital in Jerusalem, the rule of law, pluralism, and the rights of women and youth. He added that Mubadara accepted the PLO program in 2004, but has not been allowed to join the PLO.

17. (SBU) According to Barghouti, Mubadara has thousands of supporters, is reaching out to young people in schools and universities, and building community ties. He said the party

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is organizing at the village level and representatives participate in local councils that feed into regional district committees. He said the party's central council has 35 representatives in the West Bank and 12 in Gaza. There are parallel structures for women and for youth at each level and representatives on the central council. Barghouti said 90 percent of the party's members were not previously members of any other political party. He said Mubadara is strongest in Hebron, Nablus, Salfit, and then Ramallah, but he is its only current national figure

18. (U) Bio Note: Dr. Mustafa Barghouti was Minister of Information in the NUG and took second place in the 2005 presidential elections. He is currently the General Secretary of Mubadara, a centrist political party that won

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two seats and 2.7 percent of the vote in 2006 PLC elections (in a coalition with independents).

19. (U) Staffdel Talwar cleared on this cable.
DUFFY